

**ASHINGTON TOWN COUNCIL**  
**DRAFT Minutes of the Finance & General Services Committee,**  
**held at 6:00pm on Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> September 2023**  
**at Ashington Town Hall, 65 Station Road**

**COUNCILLORS PRESENT:**

Cllrs. Lynne Grimshaw (Chair), Vicky Brown, Matthew Cuthbert, Glyn Davies, Pauline Thompson, Caroline Ball, John Tully, Mark Purvis, Jim Lang, and Sophie Robinson.

**ALSO, IN ATTENDANCE**

Sarah Eden – Executive Officer and RFO, Stephen Humphrey – Assets and Facilities Officer and Gary Holmes – Administration Assistant

**FGS23/060 WELCOME BY THE CHAIR**

Welcome by the Chair Cllr Lynne Grimshaw.

**FGS23/061 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Louis Brown, Marjorie Chambers and Victor Bridges.

**FGS23/062 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS**

No disclosure of interests.

**FGS23/063 DISPENSATIONS**

No dispensations were requested.

**FGS23/064 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There were no items for consideration from members of the public and there were no members of the public present at the meeting.

**FGS23/065 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING**

It was **AGREED** to **RECEIVE** and **SIGN** as a true record, the minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> August 2023

**FGS23/066 BUDGET AND EXPENDITURE 2023/24****a) Updated Budget Report**

It was **AGREED** to **RECEIVE** an updated budget report.

There were no questions from Cllrs to the RFO.

**b) Half-Year Review**

It was **AGREED** to **NOTE** those budget headings that have been highlighted with expected underspend.

The RFO drew Cllrs attention to the following several budget headings that could potentially underspend.

The RFO noted a projected underspend in this heading which was the result of the budget having been set without firm plans and costs in place. It was noted that budget planning in 2024/25 should make clear those areas of spending that need to be drawn from here and set a budget for it. In regards the projected underspend, the RFO noted that the Council might consider funding towards Halloween events being held in the town, that the Christmas lights switch-on event could be enhanced, or an easter event could be planned that would be paid for in this financial year, although held in the next. Additionally, the Council may want to consider funding some holiday and food events in the easter holidays.

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Cllr Ball expressed the need to ensure the Council was not funding something already being funded if HAF programmes were supported.

The RFO reminded Cllrs that they agreed £5,000 for each ward for environmental improvements, with projects carried out in central and college wards. Other projects needed to be brought forward if they were to be realised in the current financial year, or the allocated funding could be moved elsewhere or go into balances.

Climate Change Projects and Initiatives was highlighted by the RFO as a potential underspend, but there was spending included on the agenda for the meeting. The RFO also noted that there were some small grant applications that could be appropriately allocated from this heading, or the Council may like to launch a small grant scheme specifically in pursuit of green goals. The RFO emphasised that those officers and members who have completed their Carbon Literacy training need to come together and plan how their pledges are being brought forward, which may require budget consideration.

The RFO was pleased to note that all other spending was on track, and additionally earmarked reserves would be reimbursed in respect of spending on play areas, following the successful application of Windfarm Funding.

**c) Accounts Paid and to be Paid (including Bank Reconciliation)**

It was **AGREED to RECEIVE** a schedule of accounts paid and to be paid; to endorse those accounts paid and **AGREED** those to be paid, since 31<sup>st</sup> July 2023.

**FGS23/067 CASUAL VACANCY – HAYDON WARD NOTICE OF ELECTION**

It was **AGREED to RECEIVE** formal notification of an election, scheduled to be held on Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> October, with nominations open from Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> September 2023 until 4pm on Friday 15<sup>th</sup> September 2023.

**FGS23/068 EVENTS, COMMUNITY & ENGAGEMENT**

**a) Summary of events**

It was **AGREED to RECEIVE** the report of recent events held and funded, including Great Big Green Week, Ashington Fair Day, activities on Station Road over the summer, and summer holiday funded events.

Cllr John Tully expressed that the Council should be pleased with the level of events and engagement over the summer period and that it was clear that everyone had worked exceptionally hard. Cllr Tully and Cllr Grimshaw echoed each other's praise for the work of officers in support of events, and in particular the Communication and Engagement Officer, Sharon Parmley.

**b) Events, Community and Engagement Budget**

It was **AGREED to RECEIVE** a summary of spending on events and **AGREED** to endorse the movement of funds between events, note high-cost items, and consider future spending.

The RFO repeated comments made in respect of the half-year review, that it was important to set realistic budgets in respect of what is deliverable thought-out the year. It was highlighted that

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all costs for events are properly accounted for allowing the Council to make informed decisions based on value for money, and engagement value.

### **FGS23/069 GREEN LANE ALLOTMENTS – NEW WATER CONNECTION**

#### **a) New Connection at Green Lane Allotment Site**

**It was AGREED to RECEIVE** the report from the Assets & Facilities Manager recommending a new connection for the water supply at Green Lane Allotments, circumventing approximately 75m of pipework through the gardens, alongside the railway line and back down to the water meter, in favour of 8m pipework straight across the road.

The Assets and Facilities Manager noted that completing this extra piece of work would complete the water scheme in full and the Council could be assured there would not be leaks from pipework that would be very expensive to reach and repair – therefore a complete job.

#### **b) Quotation for work**

**It was AGREED to RECEIVE** costs and specification for work to be undertaken by Northumbrian Water Limited, as well as new pipework by P2 Utilities.

Northumbrian Water £4,505 to install approximately 8m of alkathene piping from new connection to water meter.

P2Utilities Ltd £300.00 to dig out and lay approximately 8m of 32mm pipe for new connection, to be backfilled and reinstated.

**It was AGREED** to place an order for the work to be carried out any to take the required funds £4,805 from General Reserves and Contingency.

### **FGS23/070 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

In accordance with section 1 (2) LGA 1960, **it was AGREED** to exclude the press and public due to the confidential nature of the business being transacted.

### **FGS23/071 MANAGEMENT OF ASHINGTON ALLOTMENTS**

**It was AGREED to DEFER** the matter to the Full Council meeting on Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> September 2023.

### **FGS23/072 NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL – ENHANCED SERVICES NEGOTIATIONS**

**It was AGREED to RECEIVE** a report of the meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> July 2023, and endorse the action taken.

### **FGS23/073 STATION ROAD CCTV**

**It was AGREED to FORMALLY APPROVE** the preferred supplier to work with the Council, and Neighbourhood Policing Team on an updated and appropriate CCTV solution for Station Road, Ashington.

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The Council received expressions of interest and held presentations for three different providers.

**It was AGREED** to work with Asset Watch as the preferred supplier for CCTV provision on Station Road.

The meeting was updated that Asset Watch would be invited to meet with the Council and Neighbourhood Policing Team and would be expected to provide a full written tender, which would be brought back to the FGS Committee for consideration and agreement.

**FGS23/074 DATE, TIME, AND VENUE FOR THE NEXT MEETING**

Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> October 2023, 6:00pm, Council Chamber.

**Meeting ended 19:19pm**

AGREED